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ABSTRACT

Three papers intended as preliminary studies to bilingual professional curriculum development are included. "Speech Acts and Discourse Analysis," by Terry McCoy, represents an introduction to discourse analysis as a tool for the language teacher. The notion of a typology of speech acts is set forth, and models of discourse analysis by Sinclair/Coulthard and Candlin are discussed. In "Developing the Ability to Communicate in Work Situations," Giles Bilodeau discusses the relationship between linguistic competence and communicative competence. The goal of occupational language training for professionals is deemed to be the ability to handle office situations in a second language with the same ease as in the first language. The development of such competence is outlined in a structured series of considerations and recommended class activities. Finally, in "Approximative Systems, Communicative Competence and the Speaker's Freedom," Michel Lange deals with the instructional implications of approximative systems used by learners. Constraints on the speaker's freedom that are related to linguistic competence, error acceptability, and sociocultural factors are discussed. (JB)

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE, SPEECH ACTS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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LA COMPETENCE A COMMUNIQUER, LES ACTES LANGAGIERS ET L'ANALYSE DU DISCOURS

Speech Acts and Discourse

Analysis

by Terry McCoy

Developing the Ability to

Communicate in Work

Situations

by Gilles Bilodeau

Approximative Systems,

Communicative Competence, and

the Speaker's Freedom

by Michel Lange

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FOREWORD

The present volume entitled Communicative Competence, Speech Acts and Discourse Analysis is a collection of three papers, which were originally presented in three consecutive seminars of the Research Division, in the month of July 1975. The papers represented part of the efforts of a team of researchers and curriculum designers towards the preparation of a proposal for a research and development project. The objective of the project was to provide research information and teaching material on modular second language curricula based on the development of communicative skills required by bilingual jobs.

In August, 1975, the proposal entitled a Package of Projects for the Design of Modules Centering on the Development of Job-Related Communicative Skills was presented to the SDB Management Committee for approval. The Package consists of the following ten projects:

1. Co-ordination and consultation.
2. Sampling Communication in job-specific Situations.
3. Pilot Study for a Discourse Analysis for Selected Modes of Communication in French and English within the Public Service.
4. Discourse Analysis of Selected Modes of Communication in English within the Public Service.
5. Discourse Analysis of Selected Modes of Communication in French within the Public Service.
6. Learning Objectives formulated by Second Language Learners.
7. Specific Vocabulary.

8. A Study on the Concept of 'Modular Curriculum' with reference to the existing language teaching programs conducted within SDB.
9. Design and Development of Several Experimental Modules to teach the Language Functions associated with Specific Communicative Situations studied in Projects 4 and 5.
10. Design and Development of Several Experimental Modules to Teach Specific Vocabulary associated with particular Work Environment.

With the approval of the SDB Management Committee, the first phase of the project, consisting of the Sampling Project (i.e. Project 2), The Pilot Discourse Analysis Project (i.e. Project 3) and The Specific Vocabulary Project (i.e. Project 7) were carried out between the months of August and December, 1975. Reports on these projects are meanwhile being prepared for wider dissemination.

The second phase of the project, consisting of the Main Discourse Analysis (English) Project (i.e. Project 4), Main Discourse Analysis (French) Project (i.e. Project 5), the Learning Objectives Project (i.e. Project 6) and the Modular Curriculum Project (i.e. Project 8), was begun in January.

We thought it might be a good idea to put the papers written by Terry McCoy on "Speech Acts and Discourse Analysis", Gilles Bilodeau on "Le développement d'une aptitude à communiquer en situation de travail", and Michel Lange on "Systèmes approximatifs, compétence communicative et la liberté du locuteur", which paved the way for the ensuing projects, under the same cover for wider dissemination.

22.1.76

Rosaline K. Chiu
Co-ordinator of
the Package of Projects.

SPEECH ACTS AND DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS

Terry McCoy

1. Introduction

There is an unavoidable problem for those of an empirical nature who would like to investigate language beyond the levels of phonology and syntax. The empirically minded who move into the area of semantics, stylistics, textual analysis and discourse analysis find themselves having to use techniques more familiar to the philosopher than the linguist. This is because those areas of language study which are based on semantics as opposed to linguistic form are relatively young as sciences. As Austin has pointed out with reference to philosophy

It's the dumping ground for all the leftovers from other sciences where everything turns up which we don't quite know how to take. As soon as someone discovers a respectable and reliable method of handling some portion of these residual problems, a new science is set up, which tends to break away from philosophy just as and when its subject matter becomes better defined and its authority more good. (Austin, 1970; p. 42)

The intent of this paper is not to pursue the elusive distinction between philosophy and science, nor to attempt to delineate the areas of competence appropriate to the philosophy of language and the science of linguistics but to discuss a functional analysis of language in use.

It just so happens that discourse analysis, still at the embryonic stage, has not yet completely broken away from, and may never completely break away from, those speculative procedures which have been the stock in trade of philosophers since the Greeks. All science, as the earlier quotation from Austin points out, is an outgrowth of philosophy, but in certain areas of linguistics the dependence on philosophical speculation is much more obvious.

The concept of 'speech act' is a case in point. As a tentative definition we might say that a speech act is the utterance by a speaker of a sentence with the intention that the sentence be understood as an expression of his thought. John Searle has taken the concept of speech act and has explored it at length from the point of view of a philosopher of language (Searle, 1969). Researchers studying discourse analysis, notably Sinclair and Coulthard (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1969) and Candlin (Candlin, 1974) have built their analytic models using the concept of speech act as the basic unit. Is the speech act that Searle explores the same as the speech act that Sinclair and Coulthard refer to? A simple and easily defended answer to this question is "No".

Sinclair and Coulthard state explicitly that the function of an utterance for them is different from what it is for Searle (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1969; p.14). To understand this difference as well as what appear to be some very important similarities, I will touch on four points: firstly, Searle's various types of speech acts, secondly, Searle's discussion of rules which underlie the utterance of speech acts, thirdly, the components of Sinclair and Coulthard's model for analyzing discourse and fourthly, Candlin's model for analyzing discourse.

2. Types of Speech Acts

I referred to the earlier definition I gave for speech act as tentative because it refers to the performance of what might be called the complete or self-contained speech act, what Searle calls an illocutionary act. Rather than attempt to be frivolously original in describing Searle's typology of speech acts I will use as often as necessary the same examples he offers in the course of his explanations (Searle, 1969; p.22). It is also to be understood that the sentences offered as examples are assumed to have been uttered meaningfully in appropriate circumstances.

To see what he means by distinguishing between different types of speech acts, consider the following sentences:

1. Sam smokes habitually
2. Does Sam smoke habitually?

In uttering either of those sentences a speaker performs at least three types of acts. He utters a string of morphemes or words; he makes a proposition by referring to Sam and predicating something of him; and lastly he makes an assertion or a question, (or other examples could be of promising, commanding, approving, arguing or the like). Performing the act of uttering words or sentences is an *utterance act*; referring and predicating something is a *propositional act*; asserting, questioning or promising is an *illocutionary act*. An utterance act and a propositional act are characteristically performed in the course of uttering an illocutionary act.

Propositional acts could be further sub-divided into referring acts and predicating acts but a discussion at that degree of refinement is not necessary in this paper. What is important is Searle's approach to illocutionary acts. All meaningful, intentional utterances involve the performance of some form of illocutionary act and most involve a propositional act, but not all. The examples of Sam and his habitual smoking contain a proposition. The statement and the question contain the same proposition: habitual smoking is predicated of the object Sam. What makes the sentences different is their illocutionary force. Sentence 1 makes an assertion regarding the proposition and sentence 2 questions the proposition.

Illocutionary acts can be performed without any propositional content. Greetings such as "Hello", "Good morning", exclamations such as "Wow",

"Great" and cheers such as "Hurray" or "Boo" do not make any reference or predication but nevertheless constitute illocutionary acts, each with its own illocutionary force.

Within this framework Searle attempts to lay the groundwork for the construction of sets of rules that constrain a speaker who is using particular illocutionary acts and that by the same token explain why particular types of illocutionary acts mean what they mean. Before giving an example of a set of such rules I would like to deal with a small but crucial distinction that Searle makes between rules that simply regulate and rules that define the meaning of something.

3. Regulatory and Constitutive Rules

Again where I feel it will be helpful I will use the examples Searle uses since my dependence on his ideas is in no way minimized by my dreaming up new examples.

At the beginning of his discussion of rules Searle mentions that he is quite certain of the distinction he sees between what he calls regulative rules and those he calls constitutive rules, but he does not find it easy to state clearly what this distinction is. The fact that he felt the need to mention this does not really boost my confidence in my ability to explain the distinction in a sentence or two, but an attempt must be made.

Both types of rules regulate behaviour. But in the case of regulative rules the behaviour has no logical dependence on the rule. The behaviour pre-exists the rule. Constitutive rules are responsible for the behaviour being interpreted as what it is. The behaviour is logically dependent on the rules (Searle, 1969; p.34). As examples of constitutive rules Searle cites the rules of games. Carrying a football over an opponents goal-line while the ball is in play constitutes a touchdown. Shooting the puck at the opponent's net, while the puck is in play, is part of the behaviour of playing hockey. Without such rules, such behaviour would be utterly absurd. In order for particular types of behaviour such as getting touchdowns, taking a shot on goal, check-mating an opponent to exist there have to be rules which specify or describe their existence.

Regulatory rules depend on a natural effect or result. There is a traffic rule that states that one must stop at a stop sign. If one, however, comes to an intersection without a stop sign and stops to let a car cross one's path one can give a description or specification of the act of stopping just the same as if one had been following the rule of stopping for a stop sign. One could not give a meaningful description of a chess game without knowing the rules that govern the moves of the chessmen and what constitutes winning the game.

Regulatory rules generally take the form of imperatives :

Do X or Do X if Y.

Constitutive rules generally take the form of a statement which is a partial definition

X counts as Y in context C

With this distinction in mind we can return to an example of a set of rules that govern the performance of a particular type of speech act. It is Searle's hypothesis that

... the semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and that speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules.

The following is the set of rules in a slightly paraphrased form governing the performance of the illocutionary act of promising (Searle, 1969; p.63). This act generally requires the use of some expression such as "I promise ..." to mark the illocutionary force, but this illocutionary force-indicating device or promising device can be dropped if the context and the utterance clearly show that rule 4 in the following set has been satisfied.

- Rule 1. The promising device is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence (or larger stretch of discourse), the utterance of which predicates some future act of the speaker.
- Rule 2. The promising device is to be uttered only if the hearer prefers the speaker doing the future act to his not doing it, and if the speaker believes the hearer prefers this.
- Rule 3. The promising device is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both the speaker and the hearer that the speaker will perform the future act in the normal course of events.

Rule 4. The promising device is to be uttered only if the speaker intends to do the future act.

Rule 5. The utterance of the promising device counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do the future act.

A considerable amount of time and space could be devoted to the discussion of these rules but the point of citing them in this instance is not to demonstrate their explanatory adequacy with regard to the act of promising. They exemplify the general type of rule which is assumed to underlie discourse. Rules 1, 2, 3 and 4 are of the regulatory type, that is, they take the form : Utter the promising device only if Rule 5 is of the constitutive type, of the form : The promising device counts as It is this rule 5 which is the essential rule; it is what essentially gives meaning to the illocutionary act of promising. Searle lists rules for eight other illocutionary acts with the essential rule in each case being of the constitutive type.

4. Sinclair and Coulthard's Model of Discourse Analysis

At the beginning of this paper, I stated that Sinclair and Coulthard claimed that the concept they had of the function of an utterance differed from Searle's. In one very obvious sense this is true and this will be dealt with shortly. There is, however, the undeniable similarity of shared assumptions, one of which is that the functions of speech acts are governed by rules. And if speech acts differ from one another in their functions it is because the meaning of the functions is determined by different constitutive rules which govern them. Why does a particular

sentence count as a request when it has the grammatical form of a statement? Because of the rules governing its utterance which determine that it counts as a request.

Another assumption shared by both Searle and Sinclair and Coulthard is that the basic unit of language, when it is viewed as a means of communication, is not a word or sentence, but the utterance of words or sentences in the performance of a speech act.

Let us look briefly now at Sinclair and Coulthard's model for analyzing discourse. Classroom discourse was chosen because of the built-in structure due to the lesson format. This means that there was a general, explicit function for each encounter between those involved, the teacher and students. Spontaneous social conversation would not have this over-arching function, but would jump from topic to topic and function to function and would make any innovative or exploratory analysis unnecessarily complicated.

The primary or basic unit in the Sinclair-Coulthard model is a speech act that typically appears in the form of one free clause plus any subordinate clause attached to it. Twenty-two acts are defined. The definitions always take the form of a statement of the characteristic realization of the act and the function that the act performs in discourse. For example :

Marker Realized by a closed class of items "well", "O.K.", "now",
 "good", "right", "alright". When the marker is acting as

the head of a framing move it has a falling intonation (1) or (1+), as well as silent stress. Its function is to mark boundaries in the discourse.

Starter Realized by statement, question or command. Its function is to provide information about or direct attention to or thought towards an area in order to make a correct response to the initiation more likely.

Elicitation Realized by question. Its function is to request a linguistic response (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; p.40).

The definition of an elicitation could be somewhat misleading if it were taken without further explanation. An elicitation is realized in its "unmarked" form by a question, but can be realized in a "marked" form by a statement or an imperative. For example, the unmarked form of an elicitation that seeks a person's name could be, "What is your name?" The marked forms, on the other hand, could be, "I don't believe I know your name", or "Give me your name, please" or "Your name, please". Why these last three sentences are said to be marked is that in a stretch of discourse there are extra-linguistic variables which determine the interpretation that will be applied to an utterance. These variables can be considered under the headings of *situation* and *tactics*.

Situational variables "include all relevant factors in the environment, social conventions and shared experience of the participants" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; p.28). In dealing with this area of situation, Sinclair and Coulthard reveal a considerable degree of similarity to Searle in that they postulate rules that specify the situational factors that would predict when sentences having the grammatical

forms of declaratives and interrogatives would be interpreted as something other than statements or questions.

By looking at their first rule one can see that it is of the constitutive type, that is, X counts as Y in context C, and that it parallels the type of specifications Searle offered for the illocutionary act of promising.

Sinclair and Coulthard's Rule 1.

An interrogative is to be interpreted as a *command to do* if it fulfills all the following conditions:

- (i) it contains one of the modals *can, could, will, would* (and sometimes *going to*);
 - (ii) if the subject of the clause is also the addressee;
 - (iii) the predicate describes an action which is physically possible at the time of the utterance (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; p.32).
- e.g. Would you close the door please.

The other variable that served as a determinant of the function of an utterance was tactics. By tactics is meant "the syntagmatic patterns of discourse : the way in which items precede, follow and are related to each other" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; p.29). The following example demonstrates the influence of tactics on the interpretation of discourse acts according to the model we are dealing with here. A teacher is showing pupils pictures of warning signs used on roads.

- T. What about this one? This I think is a super one. Isobel, can you think what it means?
- P. Does it mean there's been an accident further along the road?
- T. No.

The first question uttered by the teacher is not interpreted as an elicitation because it is followed by a comment. The first question, then, functions as a starter and the pupils turn their efforts toward answering the second question which, in this sequence of functions, is interpreted as an elicitation.

In addition to analyzing classroom discourse into its functional components in terms of speech acts Sinclair and Coulthard constructed a rank structure based on functions.

The twenty-two different speech acts, the theoretical basis of which we have just discussed, constitute rank V, the most refined level of analysis. (For examples of the components of each rank see Appendix).

At the next level, rank IV, the structural element is a move. Moves are made up of acts in the way that words are made up of morphemes. A move is the smallest free unit of discourse. It functions to introduce a topic, e.g., "Today we're going to talk about goldfish", to conclude a discourse "I hope that all of you understand everything about goldfish now", to bring other people into an exchange, to respond to questions and to follow-up another speaker's comments.

Moves combine at rank III to form exchanges. Exchanges closely resemble paragraphs in writing. Typical exchanges in the classroom consist of an initiating move by the teacher, a response by the pupil and feedback by the teacher. But there are elements of this rank called boundary exchanges that consist of one word from a small set (right, well, good, etc.) followed by a pause and a metastatement about what has just been done or is about to be done.

The elements that make up rank II are transactions. One of the reasons Sinclair and Coulthard give for including elements at this rank is that boundary exchanges were found to occur and it seemed logical that boundary exchanges would be setting the limits of some larger element and this larger element they called a transaction.

At rank I the structural element is the lesson which is pedagogically determined, that is, it is a segment of the teaching program that the teacher considers could be handled within a particular period of time, and from the point of view of discourse analysis is not considered to be a component of anything larger.

5. Candlin's Model of Discourse Analysis

The theoretical considerations that applied to Sinclair and Coulthard at the level of speech acts apply also to Candlin who does not attempt to establish a rank structure but chooses a classification system for the speech acts that were isolated in the course of his research conducted on the discourse that occurred in the emergency department of English hospitals.

In the emergency department of a hospital, doctors, nurses, patients and various other people were found to employ language in the performance of two broad categories of functions: *task-oriented functions* and *meta-communicative functions*.

Task-oriented functions are those related to carrying out those duties a doctor is required to do; for example, questioning a patient about his injury, prescribing medication, filling out a medical report. A further sub-division of task-oriented functions is made along a cognitive-affective dimension.

Cognitive task-oriented functions involve seeking, conveying or processing information, while *affective task-oriented functions* involve dealing with the patient's feelings, emotions, sensitivities and the like. Utterances can seldom be categorized as either strictly cognitive or strictly affective. An utterance whose function is primarily to inform the patient will often serve to reassure him also. It is only exchanges between doctors that tend to be exclusively cognitive.

Meta-communicative functions serve to clarify the communication between interlocutors. Such functions are communication about communication. The doctor might ask the patient if he has understood fully the instructions about taking certain medication.

In addition to the functional variation resulting from the cognitive-affective factor and the task-specific versus meta-communicative factor

(i.e. focus of the utterance) there are two other factors taken into account by Candlin, one relating to the status and role of the interlocutors and the other to the medium of communication.

Taking all these factors into consideration one can outline typical communications networks which could be of utmost importance to the language teaching course designer. One such network might be relatively simple, a doctor interviewing a patient, with the responsibility of initiating conversation always falling to the doctor. More complex networks might involve a specialist, the doctor on call, a nurse and a patient. Conversational protocol in this situation, although native speakers would be oblivious to it, is quite subtle and sophisticated. Ignorance of this protocol on the part of the doctor could result in the patient's feeling he is being ignored, talked down to or intentionally confused with technical jargon. The patient could quickly lose confidence in the medical staff if the conversation inadvertently revealed confusion or misunderstanding. The medical staff could arrive at the wrong diagnosis if the patient's explanation in lay language was misinterpreted or incorrectly decoded when put into the technical language of a medical report.

In the material selection for a syllabus it is only a consideration of the functions for which language will be used that will allow a course to truly cater to a student's needs. A doctor could get along with only the task-oriented functions, or even more specifically with only the

restricted task-oriented functions conveyed in the technical language of medical textbooks, but his job would be greatly complicated. To function with ease he has to have available a repertoire of meta-communicative functions and an ability to decode technical language into everyday language and vice versa.

The course designer is called upon to strike a balance between laying stress on those frequently occurring functions (most often meta-communication) and those that occur less frequently but which are central to the student's job. If a student can be instructed in such a way that he develops an optimal ratio between meta-communicative functions and task-oriented functions he will avoid both major traps the second-language speaker is prone to falling into; that is, the appearance of stiffness or excessive reserve on the one hand, and superfluous or distracting redundancy on the other.

6. Conclusion

Sinclair and Coulthard acknowledge their agreement with Searle that the basic unit of language is not the symbol, the word or the sentence, but the utterance or issuance of a speech act. But the discourse analysts were looking for the functions or the uses to which speech acts are put, while Searle, the philosopher, investigated the underlying rules that characteristically took the form of presuppositions that make an utterance count as a particular type of illocutionary act.

While the Coulthard and Sinclair and the Candlin studies were not

concerned with speech acts of the same type as Searle's, they worked from the same assumptions he did - that utterances in discourse are meaningful by virtue of the fact that they conform to certain constitutive rules. For example, a pupil saying "I don't want to" in reply to a teacher's instruction to go to the blackboard counts as disrespectful, whereas it could count as an acceptable utterance if it followed an utterance by the teacher in which he or she was soliciting the students' preferences concerning holding a play in class.

T. Mary, what do you think about the class putting on a play?

P. I don't want to.

A few last comments about the relevance of this area of study to second language teaching. Promoting the use of language in meaningful situations is not possible unless the student desires to perform a speech act. To perform a speech act a speaker must intend to mean something. In classroom exercises the intended meaning is virtually ignored so that when uttering a string of words, say, "What would you do if you won a million dollars?" the student does not intend to mean anything literal but intends to produce a grammatically correct sentence, or to conform to the demands of his role as student. The student, then, is not performing the speech act of eliciting information, but is performing the speech act of responding correctly to the demands of a lesson.

Taking language functions seriously will not result, necessarily, in radical methodological changes in second language teaching, but should result in a definite change in the orientation and disposition of the

teacher when he or she is attempting to allow or stimulate meaningful communication in the classroom. The use of techniques derived from the principles underlying group dynamics, sensitivity training, counselling, suggestopedia and the like become very important in that such techniques facilitate, not merely the practice of sentences in the target language, but the expression of each individual's own thoughts in utterances that will be interpreted as sincere and intentional speech acts.

APPENDIX

Examples of Ranks from Sinclair and Coulthard

Rank V Speech Acts

Teacher: Well try the next word, let's see if you
can get that one. (STARTER)
What's the first letter? (ELICITATION)

Rank IV Moves

The preceding two speech acts, a *starter* followed by an *elicitation* constitute one move, in this case, an initiating or opening move.

(OPENING MOVE) T: Where would you be driving do you
think if you... (ELICITATION)

NV (BID)

Yes (NOMINATION)

(ANSWERING MOVE) P: Round about Scotland in the
mountain parts (REPLY)

(FOLLOW-UP MOVE) T: In the mountains (EVALUATE)
I've seen these in Wales, but
I haven't driven in Scotland
recently. (COMMENT)

Rank III Exchanges

The preceding three moves, an *opening*, an *answering* and a *follow-up* combine to make up an exchange, in this case a teaching elicit exchange.

Another type of exchange is a boundary exchange which character-

istically has the following structure

(BOUNDARY EXCHANGE) T: Right (MARKER)
Here's the next quiz then if
you're ready. (METASTATEMENT)

Rank II Transactions

Transaction typically would begin with a boundary exchange of the type immediately preceding, then have one or more teaching exchanges and conclude with another boundary exchange.

Boundary exchange

Teaching exchange

Teaching exchange

etc.

Boundary exchange e.g.

T: Yes good. (MARKER)
So those are
all the caution
signs. (CONCLUSION)

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DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN WORK SITUATIONS

Gilles Bilodeau was working with the
Language Training Branch
when he wrote this paper.

1. Introduction

Most of the courses and methods used in the Language Training Branch gradually introduce the elements to be studied in an attempt to develop in the student a set of reflex verbal responses, or automatisms, corresponding to the most common situations of everyday life. Thus the student, using a new symbolic system for analysing what is real, learns to reconstruct reality as it is perceived, felt and thought. It is then up to the teacher to instil in the student a form of behaviour that is consistent with this new system.

I am not proposing to review the various courses used in the Language Training Branch, nor to make value judgments. Rather, I wish to discuss a pedagogical approach that would make it possible to increase the stress placed in teaching on the communication acts that the incumbent of a bilingual position is expected to encounter in the performance of his duties.

We shall therefore speak of:

- communications acts;
- linguistic competence and communicative competence;
- a new pedagogical approach.

2. The communication act

We have all on various occasions seen the basic illustration of the communication act between two subjects, an act involving an exchange of messages between two persons playing in turn the role of transmitter and receiver.

Transmitter A $\longrightarrow$ B Receiver
Receiver A $\longrightarrow$ B Transmitter

The exchange takes place through various channels.

In order to analyse the communication act, we could take a multitude of variables into account. For the purposes of this study, we shall consider only two components comprising six variables. This analysis is based on a model provided by René Richterich in an article entitled "Définition des besoins langagiers et types d'adultes". In the article, he discusses two components: the language situation and the language operation.

The language situation includes the following variables:

- the agents (the persons involved in the communication process);
- the time (in which the communication act takes place);
- the place (in which communication occurs).

The language operation includes the following variables:

- the functions (which the communication act must fulfil);
- the objects (with which the act is concerned);
- the means (used to produce the act).

Each variable is subsequently analysed according to numerous factors.

As an example, let us attempt to analyse a communication act, using the variables of the Richterich grid.

The language situation

agents: a government officer, 30 years of age / a young woman, a stranger

time: 10:30 a.m.

place: the office

The language operation

functions: the young woman is seeking part-time employment as a research assistant. The officer wishes to tell her that he cannot offer her employment at present, but that perhaps he will be able to do so in the future.

object: negotiating new positions

means: the telephone

This is the authentic, though incomplete, actualization of the communication act in question.

For the time being, uh, I don't have much... I don't have many openings since we're, let's say, negotiating some new positions. And since it's not, the matter wasn't, isn't yet settled, uh... I can't promise anything to anyone.

In order to see the effect of the different variables on the construction of the sentence, let us try to imagine the officer's response if one of the variables of the communication act were altered.

For instance:

1. The young woman telephones at 5 o'clock on Friday afternoon. (time)
2. The young woman calls the officer at home. (place)
3. The officer is in a position to offer her employment. (function)

Doubtless, the officer would have responded differently in each case.

.../3

The problem with which we are concerned here is discovering how to teach the officer to perform communication acts of this type in a second language. This is certainly not an easy matter, because it involves more than simply constructing grammatically correct sentences. The utterance, or utterances of the communication act must be appropriate to the language situation and the language operation.

3. Linguistic competence and communicative competence

The variety of the officer's responses arising from the alteration of one of the variables leads us to conclude that, to enable our students to communicate, we must provide them with a twofold competence, that is, linguistic competence and communicative competence. With the first type of competence, the student can construct a message expressing various concepts, while, with the second, he can provide an utterance appropriate to a given situation.

Some of the chief differences between the two sorts of competence are compared in the following table:

linguistic competence

- pertains to the fixed relationship between the elements of a sentence
- the basic unit is the sentence, seen as a combination of elements logically and grammatically organized to express a complete meaning
- implies a knowledge of the formal and semantic properties of sentences
- makes it possible to structure a message to express concepts of time, space, matter, quantity and so on

communicative competence

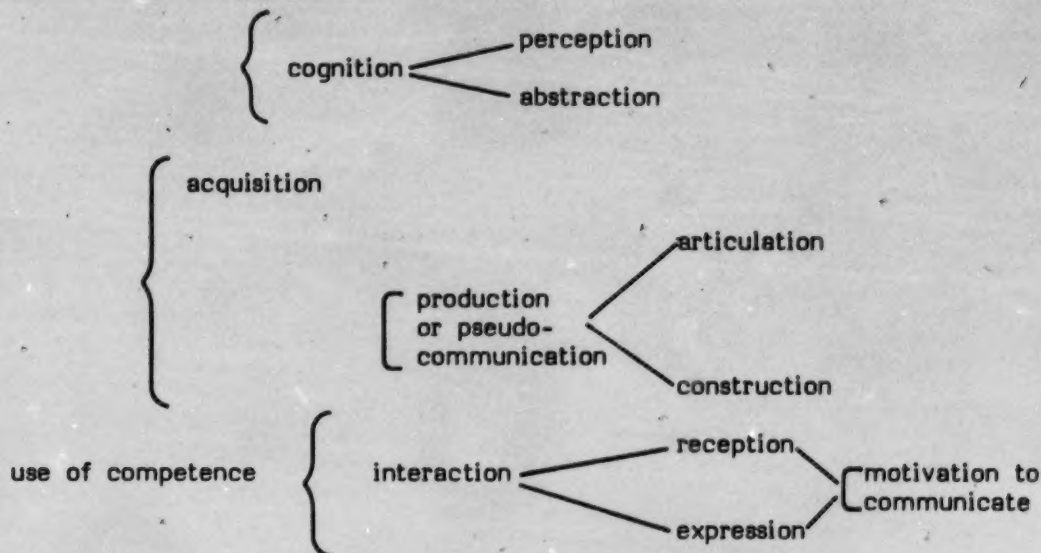
- pertains to the meaning to be given to an utterance
- the basic unit is the utterance, which may be defined as the actualization in a communication situation of a function language unit that is self-sufficient
- implies a knowledge of the conventions governing the suitable use of language in a given situation
- makes it possible to interpret and form an utterance appropriate to a given communication situation

As we have seen, communicative competence implies a certain linguistic competence. Courses and methods are often oriented toward acquiring this sort of competence. Grammarians, phoneticians and linguists have provided us with a sufficiently knowledgeable description of the rules governing the various systems of the target language. However, we do not have many data on the social use of language. Sociologists are just beginning to take an interest in the subject. Must we wait for the results of their research before modifying our methodological approaches? I do not think so, especially since the federal government has a team of teaching specialists. The entire field of discourse analysis remains to be explored. Is the speech of an SX the same as that of a CR for an identical task? Does the speech of an SX resemble that of a CR when he tells an employee that his performance is unsatisfactory?

.../4

We often take for granted that a government employee who knows how to interrupt someone and take the floor at a meeting in his own language could do the same if he were provided with the necessary linguistic elements. It must be remembered that, to interrupt another person, it is not a matter of being able to express a concept in grammatically correct sentences. Providing the person with a behaviour model is not sufficient; he must be retrained. A course must therefore be organized so as to enable the student to experiment with different types of behaviour and select one which suits him. Teaching activities must go beyond pseudo-communication, which is of no significance to the student, that is, which does not transmit what he is thinking and feeling. A good example of pseudo-communication is the student who asks someone who has been his colleague for three months, "What's your name?"

To illustrate the various operations involved in the development of linguistic competence and communicative competence, I have borrowed the illustration provided by Milga Rivers in an article entitled "Nos étudiants veulent la parole" (*Le Français dans le monde*; jan-fév 1973).

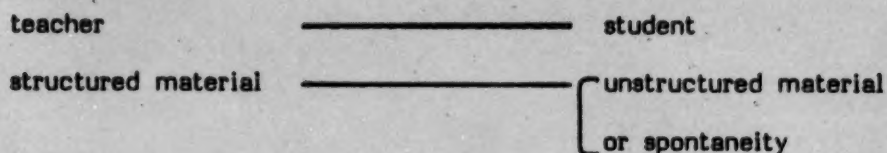


Independent interaction, or the use of competence, requires that a person first be able to identify, understand and interpret the utterances of a person speaking the target language (reception) and then that he be able to formulate and produce utterances appropriate to a given situation (expression).

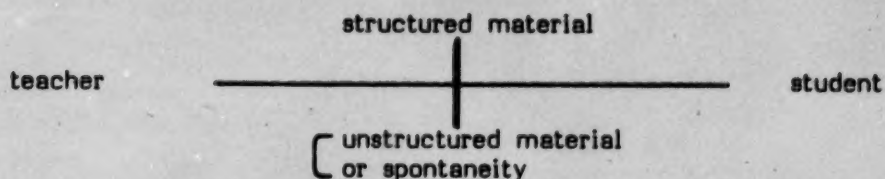
Such use, of course, implies a knowledge (cognition) of the operating rules of the systems of the target language, as well its rules of usage. Monitored production will enable the student to check the hypotheses he has made regarding rules for the functioning and usage of the language. Pseudo-communication may also provide the student with the opportunity to construct messages requiring a rapid association of elements.

There is no doubt that training is necessary if we wish to help the student make the transition from storing up linguistic knowledge to the use of this knowledge in unlimited and unpredictable situations in his daily life or at work. Do our methodology manuals suggest teaching activities prompting this sort of training? In the classroom, who chooses these activities and the way in which they are conducted? To measure the extent to which the student is left any responsibility, I would suggest this exercise to you.

I have written down nine possible classroom activities (listed below). For each activity, determine the degree of responsibility involved with respect to the various factors:



in the choice and conduct of the activity. These factors are arranged as follows:

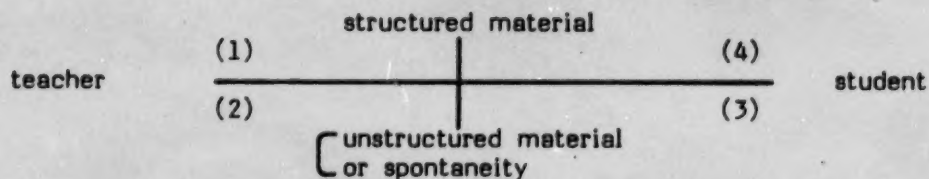


After determining the responsibility required by the various factors, situate the activity in one of the quadrants of the diagram. N.B.: the degree of responsibility increases moving away from the point at which the two lines cross.

First activity

Using questions prepared in advance, the teacher checks overall comprehension of the dialogue from one of the lessons in Dialogue Canada.

In this case, the teacher is responsible for the choice and conduct of the teaching activity. His questions, prepared in advance, become structured material. This activity thus falls into the first quadrant of the diagram.



Now rate the eight following activities.

Second activity

The teacher explains a rule about personal pronouns, a difficult subject for his students.

Third Activity

The teacher shows successive pictures illustrating sound sequences of a dialogue - the first time with the sound, the second time without sound. Each time, he has two or three students reproduce the sound group in its entirety.

.../6

Fourth Activity

One student asks the other students questions to practise drills from an earlier part of the lessons.

Fifth Activity

Using the telephone, a student obtains some information on some products, services or travel timetables.

Sixth Activity

The students choose a text to read and provide an oral summary or use it to create a dialogue.

Seventh Activity

A few students take part in a role play designed to train a student to perform a communication act specific to one of his duties.

Eight Activity

A student relates a recent news item and comments on it.

Ninth Activity

An Anglophone student records some telephone conversations of one of his Francophone colleagues to gather authentic material.

Teachers and course designers should note the teaching activities they prefer. If the third quadrant contains few activities, it will come as no surprise that the students do not manage to express themselves fluently or communicate with others.

4. New teaching approach

Since the ultimate goal of language courses is to enable the incumbent of a bilingual position to perform his duties in both official languages, I suggest that the teacher encourage his students to:

1. identify their own language needs;
2. set learning objectives related to the needs identified;
3. find the means enabling them to achieve the objectives set.

The student need not devote all his time to the pursuit of his own objectives. The teacher remains responsible for teaching activities designed to develop linguistic and communicative competence. However, he must reserve some time in which the students can pursue learning individually or in groups of two or three, according to their needs. This may mean gathering authentic material such as recorded telephone conversations of a Francophone colleague, a role play to try to explain a report to a colleague, or calling a secretary and asking for someone or making an inquiry.

.../7

Language needs are identified in relation to four variables: duties, subjects dealt with, functions and skills required.

Duties and subjects

First, the student is requested to identify and describe the five main duties of his position. He then indicates the subjects dealt with in connection with the duties described.

Functions

Next, the reason for the communication acts required to perform the duties must be clarified. Is it to ask for information or to persuade someone else to do something?

Skills required

What skills are required to perform the communication acts related to the student's work?

Appendix A contains an example of a questionnaire designed to identify a student's language needs.

5. Learning objective

Once the language acts are identified, the student formulates his own learning objectives. The definition of each objective must clearly indicate:

1. the content of what he must learn;
2. the final form of behaviour sought;
3. the learning activities that would enable him to achieve this behaviour;
4. the criteria making it possible to say whether the result obtained is satisfactory.

Types of behaviour sought:

1. being able to invite people to a meeting by telephone;
2. being able to request some information about some photocopying that has not arrived;
3. being able to explain briefly the work I do at the Department of Public Works;
4. being able to state and discuss the employment policies of the Public Service;
5. being able to give relatively simple orders to an employee.

.../8

When the ultimate form of behaviour has been determined, the content to be learned must be defined, as well as the criteria that will make it possible to measure the effectiveness of the behaviour. The teacher can help the student find some activities that will enable him to acquire the desired form of behaviour.

6. Conclusion

The teaching approach suggested will require a particular type of material. Responsibility for developing this material cannot fall entirely on the shoulders of a team of designers detached from teaching and removed from operations. Teachers have a right and a duty to take part in the preparation of material which is better suited to given learning acts. I would go so far as to include the student in the process - not in the development itself, but in the gathering and presentation of authentic material. Methods for gathering this material must still be determined and tried out.

It is high time, in any case, that someone turned his attention to the matter, since I do not believe that a team of specialists, with the most scientific research principles available, can analyse the language situations of the Public Service well enough to develop modules effectively meeting all the language needs of government employees.

For some time, it has been thought that learning a second language meant starting from zero and progressing slowly and arduously to point X, with all decisions being made for the student as to content, stages and the conditions in which learning should take place. It was not known how to exploit the general principles governing the functioning and usage of the language the student has to learn.

The teaching approach suggested is intended to increase the adult's involvement in the learning process by asking him to be responsible for the activities that will enable him to achieve set objectives. Empirical evidence will tell us whether the approach works.

APPENDIX

Analysis of communication acts encountered at work

Purpose of questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to provide you with a better awareness of the different types of communication act that you are expected to perform when carrying out your duties. At this level, no distinction is made between use of the mother tongue and use of a second language.

I. Identification and description of duties

Identify and briefly describe the five main duties of your position. Then indicate the subjects dealt with when you perform these various tasks.

An example of one duty of a staffing officer.

I must determine selection standards for a CR competition at the Department of Public Works.

subject dealt with

Data Stream, job description, basic requirements, essential qualifications, experience, competition posters, selection standards.

Duty 1

(a) description: _____

(b) subjects dealt with: _____

Duty II

(a) description: _____

(b) subjects dealt with: _____

Duty III

(a) description: _____

(b) subjects dealt with: _____

Duty IV

(a) description: _____

(b) subjects dealt with: _____

Duty V

(a) description: _____

(b) subjects dealt with: _____

II Functions

Why do you speak with other people or read a text? Is it to request information or to persuade the other person to do something? Check the functions related to the duties described in I.

I speak to:

request information

analyse information

request a service

request something

show my agreement

express a feeling or a reaction

convince or persuade

give information

disseminate information

provide a service

give something

show my disagreement

ask someone to express a
feeling or a reaction

III Skills

What skills are required for you to perform the communication acts related to your work?

I must:

(a) express myself orally:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| - in person | - in person with notes |
| - on the telephone | - using other means |

(b) read:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| - forms | - reports |
| - letters | - publications |
| - memoranda | |

(c) write:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| - forms | - reports |
| - letters | - articles for publication |
| - memoranda | |

(d) only understand when the communication is made:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| - in person | - by other means |
| - by telephone | |

(e) transcribe:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| - oral material | - written material |
|-----------------|--------------------|

(f) edit, for form:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| - oral material | - written material |
|-----------------|--------------------|

APPROXIMATIVE SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND THE SPEAKER'S FREEDOM

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1. Introduction

The traditional notion of command of a language may be summed up as follows:

- (a) The ability to construct grammatical sentences, orally and in writing;
- (b) The ability to pronounce and spell almost as well as a native speaker;
- (c) The ability to speak and write with ease;
- (d) The ability to discern various levels of language.

This notion has been inherited from classical and humanistic education, which assigns a central position in language behaviour to the knowledge of grammar, in the broad sense. The aim of teaching foreign languages is to provide the student with a competence approaching that of a native speaker. It is an ideal to be achieved. The impossibility of achieving this ideal has always been the concern of teachers: grammar, translation, contrastive analysis, error analysis, and now, communicative competence.

Since, throughout learning, the student develops a series of strategies that are expressed in coherent and consistent systems, these approximative systems must be considered in view of his ability to communicate. For a model of a speaker's communicative competence to be complete, the use of language in speech must be observed and analysed, without the limits of traditional grammatical categories, that is, the use the speaker makes of the various options offered by the language for them to be actualized in speech. In other words, to make significant generalizations on the use of language, it is necessary to begin with the functions and work toward the forms, rather than assign immutable functions to the forms.

The purpose of this article is obvious: to promote an exchange of ideas on new strategies for teaching languages (both mother tongue and foreign languages) in terms of the development of approximative systems and the student's communicative competence.

The first part of the paper contains a brief general view of the notion of approximative systems. The second part outlines communicative competence and its relevance to language teaching. In the third part, constraints of various sorts on the freedom of the speaker will be discussed (mother tongue and foreign language). The conclusion will concentrate on a new dimension and a new framework for the teaching of foreign languages.

2. The notion of approximative systems of learners (Nemser, 1971)

For Nemser, there are three crucial variables in the learning situation: (a) the source language of the student; (b) the target language; (c) the student's "état de langue" in his learning of the target language. The "état de langue" is both a construct and a reality. It varies according to its components. The "état de langue" is therefore constantly undergoing structuring, destructuring and restructuring. Approximative systems are indicators of the successive stages of the student's grammatical competence. They have a certain internal logic and coherence.

Approximative systems may thus be defined as follows: "The deviant linguistic system used temporarily by the learner in an attempt to speak the target language." (Nemser, 1971, p 116) Nemser's idea may be summarized in three points:

- (a) At a given time, the student's "état de langue" is a structured system that differs at once from the target language and the source language.
- (b) The approximative state consists of a succession of states, some of which are closer to the target language than others.
- (c) In some situations, the students' "états de langue", roughly coincide with some variants, in accordance with the differences of learning styles.

To quote Nemser:

The speech of a learner, according to the assumption, is structurally organized, manifesting the order and the cohesiveness of a system, although one frequently changing with a typical rapidity and subject to radical reorganization through the massive intrusion of new elements as learning proceeds. As such, learner speech should be studied not only by reference to LS and LT but in its own term as well. (Nemser, 1971; p 116).

For a more detailed presentation and discussion of the notion of approximative systems, Nemser (1971), Corder (1973) and Lange (1974) may be consulted.

3. The notion of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971)

Communicative competence may be defined as an individual's ability to understand and use a way of speaking that translates his own or another's intention and that is appropriate to the ambient situation. Language behaviour exhibits both pragmatic and grammatical aspects. This ability is an indication of the person's knowledge of grammar and usage - in other words, his competence.

In the past decade, the orientation of language teaching has been influenced by the Chomskyan dichotomy between competence and performance. The teaching of living languages made a major step in the right direction by admitting that exercising the faculty of language is not the result of a repertory of models reinforced by repetition, but rather a form of rules-governed creativity. However, it did not go far enough. Producing grammatical sentences that

are acceptable to a native speaker is necessary, but not sufficient. The utterances must also be appropriate to the circumstances. Producing sentences is certainly affected by the pressure caused by the constraints of the situation. The standard distinction of the "ideal speaker-hearer" implies that the speaker has more than one way of speaking at his disposal, regardless of context and usage. However, communication in a language may result in failure when the speaker does not successfully meet the requirements of certain communication situations. Therefore, what is constrained is not the code - in Bernstein's sense - it is the message.

An example of communicative competence: a given speaker may have in his repertory an entire range of sentences to indicate that a fire has started, for instance: *there is a fire; something's burning; fire has broken out; fire has just broken out; help; fire!* Out of all these sentences, only one is appropriate to an emergency to urge the occupants to evacuate the building as quickly as possible. Messages appropriate to various circumstances must be learned, as different though they are all derived from the same basic sentence, "*there's a fire*".

By claiming that linguistic competence is a component of communicative competence, sociolinguists are opening an avenue full of possibilities, not only for improvement in the teaching of a mother tongue, but also for the teaching of foreign languages.

In view of the degree of redundancy in every language, it is necessary to remain sensitive to preservation of the message despite a lack of tool words and flexional forms of some words. Telegraphese is an example. In communication, the native speaker restores to the message the elements that are not crucial to understanding. He is a sort of regulator. He even anticipates the meaning. With a child or a foreign speaker, the native speaker does not expect carefully constructed grammatical sentences to be produced. Spontaneous and vigorous speech by a native speaker is peppered with incomplete sentences and hesitations. This means that grammatical analysis would never be able to account for incomplete sentences and hesitations if it did not go beyond its descriptive device of subject, verb and complement.

In short, as teachers of foreign languages, we must take into consideration not only the student's ability to make grammatically correct sentences, but also the types of sentences appropriate to the circumstances which motivate them.

4. Links with "approximative systems"

Approximative systems were defined above: "The deviant linguistic system used temporarily by the learner in an attempt to speak the target language." (Nemser, 1971, p 116) The relationship to communicative competence seems to be easily discernible.

Communicative competence is the goal sought by the speaker (in his mother tongue and in a foreign language). Any given state of language implies an approximative system, meaning a departure from the norm, the norm being defined from both the view point of a linguistic system and the view point of adequacy of this system in a given situation. Any deviation may constitute a departure linguistically or a "*faux-pas*" with respect to the situation.

In a given state of language, the student alters, reduces and impoverishes the standard sentence form. He resorts to baby talk or pidgin. He strips the language of its redundancies. As his approximative systems evolve, he begins to perceive, restore and use redundancies spontaneously. His communicative competence depends on the extent to which he preserves the essence of the appropriate message that can be recovered by the native speaker even though the redundancies have been dropped. Furthermore, in such cases, the message is crucially dependent on the speaker's intention.

To a large extent, approximative systems are directly and constantly related to communicative competence. If a speaker's communicative competence is satisfactory, it may be said that his state of language in a given situation approaches the competence of a native speaker. However, if he expends more energy than a native speaker to convey the same information, his competence is less effective than the native speaker's, as far as cost is concerned. There is a dialectic relationship between approximative systems and communicative competence: the systems create communicative competence at the same time as they are created by communicative competence.

5. Implications for teaching and language tests

For the time being, it would be premature to speak of applications, though we can speak of implications. Communicative competence is concerned with the message. Correctness of form is secondary. What is most important is the speaker's intention, the function of the message and the rules of usage (how a native speaker ordinarily reacts in a given situation). The impact of this notion on language teaching is considerable.

Where a mother tongue is being taught, the focus is on the "traffic rules", the rules of usage governing certain ways of speaking, the constraints of the situation on style, in short, the sociolinguistic limits of the utterance, in the broadest sense of the term. It is not simply a matter of incorrect terms and tone. Teaching communicative competence also involves the questions of "who speaks, what language, to whom, when and where" (Fishman). When the Prime Minister of Canada mingles with the crowd during an electoral campaign, it is all right for a voter to say to him directly: "Hey Man, we'll make it." Such language would border on insolence if it were used in the presence of the Minister by a staff member of Finance before the presentation of the budget.

In addition to the mechanical aspects of grammar, a realistic method for teaching languages must include a component based on the way in which the speaker behaves.

In a way, learning a second language is like acquiring the mother tongue. The same strategies would be almost equally valid for the learning of foreign languages. At the risk of becoming repetitious, in focusing on the message and function, what is essential is the speaker's intention. Grammatical correctness, though not ignored, is secondary. The student is encouraged to concentrate on the factual aspect of his language acts, even if his utterances are not always faithful grammatical reproductions. As with learning the mother tongue, speaking pidgin is an inevitable stage. This position may appear to be suspect. More than one person will see in this the work of an outrageous iconoclast. However, if we observe the man in the street, we see that he acquires language by putting it into practice, by using it. He conveys the expe-

rience he wishes to communicate by direct and authentic language with acceptable linguistic departures. Halliday writes: "The mastery of language, it should be insisted, is not simply the ability to say what one means; rather, it is the ability to mean." (Doughty, P et al, Language in Use, 1971, p 4)

The training of teachers must also be taken into consideration. Further thought must be given to the originality of learning a second language in a natural environment. Until a student is able to absorb new aspects of the language, he cannot record them in his cognitive system. Forcing him results in a short circuit.

Unfortunately, teachers sometimes force their students to repeat a construction or a sound three or four times, with no regard for the learning process, without recalling the difference between an adult and a kindergarten pupil. Even before the teacher becomes impatient, the student's reaction turns into a psychological block, accompanied by decreased motivation and a sort of learning petrification. Sometimes, the student simply gives up entirely, adopting a barely disguised resistance to language learning. That's demotivation.

A good language teaching methodology could promote a sort of balanced skills approach, based on encouragement of the student to share his experience. Gradual improvement of expression would follow in relation to the model. Finally, the rhythm would be directly combined with the appropriateness of the expression.

Learning and teaching objectives could also be used as a guide in the presentation strategy. A student learning a language for the sole purpose of reading a professional journal or as a result of any other instrumental motivation would be better off with the grammatical approach. However, a student who deals with the public or has integrative motivation would need to learn how to communicate.

Students must stop feeling that they have committed a sin if they make a mistake and emphasis must be laid on communication. When a student is able to produce the correct form, he will do so with pleasure. After all, it is possible to learn a language and take pleasure in it too.

Such a provocative approach would, of course, upset the model and significance of foreign language tests. The items should elicit factual utterances from the student. It might be interesting to rate the student according to: adequacy, grammaticalness and fluency. The student must be stimulated to become involved.

6. Constraints on the speaker's freedom

The degree of freedom may be defined as follows: the set of options available in the speaker's repertory in a communication situation. There is a major difference between the very limited choices of the beginner, the relative ease of advanced bilingual student and the complete ease of the cultivated native speaker. The same problem exists for native speakers, depending on their socioeconomic class. Various sorts of constraints may place the speaker in an insecure and precarious position so that the range of types of utterances available to him are extremely limited.

(a) Constraints related to linguistic competence

The student's freedom varies according to the extent to which he commands the language. In a given situation, among all the paraphrases or possible transformations of a type of sentence, only one is really appropriate to the situation. Theoretically, the native speaker who knows his language well and aware of his culture does not have any difficulty. This is independent of the notions of dialect and level of language. As an example, let us take the emphatic transformation, beginning with the basic sentence, better designated as a "straight sentence":

1. I saw my friends again.
2. My friends, I saw them again. (left dislocation + shadow pronoun)
3. I saw them again, my friends. (shadow pronoun + right dislocation)
4. The ones I saw again were my friends. (cleft sentence)
6. Myself, I saw my friends again. (left dislocation + shadow pronoun)
7. I saw my friends again, myself. (right dislocation + shadow pronoun)
8. My friends, themselves, I saw again. (double dislocation)
9. My friends, I saw them again, themselves. (double dislocation)
10. I saw them again, themselves, my friends. (double dislocation)
11. I saw them again, my friends, themselves.

A multitude of sentences may thus be derived from the same core (sentence 1) by various transformations or transformations with various directions. They are not necessarily equivalent and they depend on the intention of the speaker in the situation giving rise to them.

Any native speaker has the range from 1 to 10 in his repertory and will perhaps reject 11 as being strange, unacceptable and inconsistent with his linguistic feeling. In this paradigm, therefore, his choice is unlimited. However, in a given state of language, the student's approximative systems do not include such a range of possibilities. He is not able, either, to invent an adequate structure to express the subtlety he wishes to. In this case, it is not a matter of deficiencies nor shortcomings in the student's repertoire, but rather a matter of departures from the native speaker's model.

Constraints of tone may be added to this. The learner cannot master all registers. There is also use of incorrect terms, resulting in socio-linguistic *faux-pas*. When the student does not have adequate sentences at his disposal, he resorts to another type of sentence, whose meaning is close, but which does not properly translate what he intends.

The student's freedom of expression is therefore considerably limited by these factors. He is also unable to assign them adequately to the appropriate situation.

(b) Constraints imposed by the acceptability of mistakes to the listener

In direct communication situations, the speaker's performance is influenced by the listener's attitude. This is not necessarily a question of relative social position, but mainly of attitude with regard to language slips and errors.

Reactions vary: a burst of laughter, a smile, correction and expansion of the faulty structure, replacement of the improper term, of silence. Depending on the listeners's awareness of the notion of errors, he will intervene in the speaker's stream of speech, sometimes thoughtlessly, spoiling the rhythm, impetus or even the pleasure of communicating. Depending on the student's temperament, he will continue, repeat or stop short.

The teacher's notion of the acceptability of mistakes has serious implications for developing communicative competence in the target language. As long as the student is describing his own experiences, it would be a pity to intervene and stifle his spontaneity. It might be better to let him speak and later pick out a few of the structures he has deformed.

It has been noted that adults and children sometimes go through identical phases in the learning process. It has also been noted that children are seldom corrected specifically when they use deviant grammatical forms. It may therefore be assumed that the untimely correction of an adult's errors goes against the spontaneous learning process. When he has assimilated the correct form, he will produce it spontaneously. The more freely a student speaks, the more easily he overcomes his inhibitions.

(c) Constraints on communication from sociocultural factors

The sociocultural framework exerts a determining influence on language behaviour. Depending on whether one is dealing with diglossia or with a level of language identified as a mark of belonging to a culture, the attitudes of the listener may exert severe constraints on the speaker.

In the case of diglossia, both languages or levels of language are used complementarily; or better, they are situational variants of each other. Their use is not conflicting in that they are assigned functions of a clearly marked nature. The person who did not observe these conventions might incur severe looks, an eloquent silence or some other form of appropriate penalty.

Nevertheless, there are obvious cultural values attached to the use of a variant of a language. It is to be expected that a foreigner will use a neutral level of language, common to various communities. Any attempt to express himself in this variant with cultural overtones may be regarded by speakers as an affront or unacceptable interference and meet with astonishment, an amused smile or even occasionally a snub, accompanied by rude remarks. This innocent gesture on the part of the speaker may have the effect of a clap of thunder on a summer day.

For instance, a non-native speaker who knocks himself out trying to speak "Joual", but whose pronunciation, intonation and appropriateness betray him every time he utters something, is just "dumb". Similarly a French-speaking Quebecker who returns from a two-month stay in France with an affected Parisian accent would be quickly denounced by his peers as a "damned traitor". For the listener, this manner of speaking is not innocent.

Hence, a student should be aware of these values, which may spoil the effect he wishes to achieve. This is the difference between instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. The student's desire to identify with a group to the point of adopting its speech is certainly a powerful reinforcement. In the teaching of a second language in a cultural context, however, account must be taken of the limit of acceptability or rejection by native speakers of the foreign speaker's use of forms having marked cultural connotations in their language. By so doing, the student will be spared possible or certain embarrassment. The student's attitude with regard to a level of language, seen as unacceptable by him, may also prevent him from learning this level.

Conclusion

Grammar is only one component of communicative competence. In addition to a series of carefully constructed sentences, the speaker must know how to formulate utterances, half-sentences and suitable sighs, even if these half-sentences are not a faithful reflection of the descriptive and normative grammar of the language.

Teaching foreign languages is concerned with the latest developments of the notions of approximative systems and communicative competence. In order to respond to these notions, whose merits have been indicated above, it would be necessary to:

1. place the emphasis somewhat less on grammatical accuracy and stress the message a little more;
2. ask the teacher to make timely interventions to help the student formulate his intention;
3. make teachers realize that mistakes are quite natural, necessary and transitory;
4. give tests new dimensions and contours, based on the appropriateness of the message, grammaticalness and fluency;
5. encourage the student to speak much more of what concerns him (leisure, work, sports, modern life) so that he feels the need to communicate.

Allow us to say, in conclusion, that to study the constraints of the listener on the speaker, it would be interesting to survey the reactions of native speakers to the errors (grammatical or situational) of speakers in the target language.

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AVANT-PROPOS

Ce document intitulé Situations de communication, actes langagier et l'analyse du discours, regroupe trois conférences données dans une série de séminaires organisés par la Division de la recherche en juillet, 1975. Ces trois documents représentent l'effort d'une équipe de chercheurs et d'élaborateurs de programmes en vue de mettre sur pied un projet de recherche et d'élaboration. L'objectif global de ce projet consiste à fournir des documents de recherche ainsi que du matériel pédagogique présentés sous forme de module visant à développer les habiletés de communication requises par des postes bilingues.

En août 1975, la Division de la Recherche a présenté un ensemble de 10 projets au Comité de gestion de la Direction générale du perfectionnement pour approbation; ces projets portaient sur " Un Ensemble de modules centrés sur le développement des aptitudes à communiquer en situation de travail".

1. Coordination et consultation.
2. Etude de situations de travail.
3. Projet pilote d'analyse du discours, français et anglais, de différents types de situations de communication rencontrés à la Fonction publique.
4. Analyse du discours, en anglais, de différents types de communication choisis au sein de la Commission de la Fonction publique.
5. Même chose - en français-
6. Objectifs d'apprentissage de la langue seconde formulés par les apprenants.

7. Vocabulaire spécifique.
8. Une étude portant sur le concept de "programme par module" en rapport avec les cours et les programmes déjà existant à la Direction du perfectionnement.
9. Recherche et développement de certains modules expérimentaux pour l'enseignement des fonctions du langage reliées aux projets 4 et 5.
10. Recherche et développement de plusieurs modules expérimentaux pour l'enseignement du vocabulaire spécifique relié à une situation précise de travail.

Ayant reçu l'approbation du Comité de gestion de la Direction générale du perfectionnement, nous avons pu réaliser, du mois d'août au mois de décembre 1975, la première phase du projet soit: " L'étude de situations de travail " (projet 2), "le projet-pilote de l'Analyse du discours" (projet 3), ainsi que " le Vocabulaire spécifique " (projet 7). Les rapports concernant ces trois projets seront publiés incessamment.

La seconde partie du projet a débuté en janvier: " L'analyse du discours-anglais " (projet 4), " L'analyse du discours-français " (projet 5), " Les objectifs d'apprentissage " (projet 6) et le " Programme par module " (projet 8).

Il nous a semblé pertinent de publier les trois conférences mentionnées plus haut: "Speech Acts and Discourse Analysis" par Terry McCoy, " Le développement d'une aptitude à communiquer en situation de travail "

par Gilles Bilodeau et " Systèmes approximatifs, compétence communicative
et la liberté du locuteur " par Michel Lange; ces trois articles ayant
été les précurseurs des projets en cours.

22.1.76

Rosaline K. Chiu
Coordinatrice de l'ensemble
des projets.

LE DEVELOPPEMENT D'UNE APTITUDE
A COMMUNIQUER EN SITUATION DE
TRAVAIL

Gilles Bilodeau

1. Introduction

La plupart des cours et méthodes utilisés au Bureau des langues présentent graduellement les éléments à étudier et ils tentent de développer chez l'étudiant un stock de réponses verbales réflexes, ou automatismes, qui correspondent aux situations les plus fréquentes de la vie courante. L'étudiant apprend alors à reconstruire, selon un nouveau système symbolique d'analyse du réel, la réalité perçue, sentie et pensée. Il appartient ensuite au professeur de développer chez l'étudiant un comportement qui soit conforme à ce nouveau système.

Je ne me propose pas de passer en revue les différents cours utilisés au Bureau des langues, ni même de porter un jugement de valeur sur certains d'entre eux. Je voudrais plutôt vous exposer une approche pédagogique qui

permettrait d'axer davantage l'enseignement sur les actes de communication qu'un titulaire de poste bilingue est appelé à rencontrer dans l'exercice de ses fonctions.

Nous parlerons alors:

- d'acte de communication;
- de compétence linguistique et de compétence à communiquer;
- d'une nouvelle approche pédagogique.

2. L'acte de communication

Nous avons tous vu à différentes reprises le schéma de base de l'acte de communication entre deux sujets, acte qui implique un échange de messages entre deux personnes jouant tour à tour le rôle d'émetteur et de récepteur.

Emetteur A —————> B Récepteur

Récepteur A <————— B Emetteur

L'échange se fait par l'entremise d'un canal qui peut prendre différentes formes.

Pour analyser l'acte de communication nous pourrions tenir compte d'une multitude de variables. Pour les fins de la présente étude nous ne tiendrons compte que de deux composantes qui regroupent six variables. Cette analyse est basée sur un modèle que nous a fourni René Richerich dans un article intitulé, " Définition des besoins langagiers et types d'adultes". Il nous parle alors de deux composantes: la situation langagière et l'opération langagière.

La situation langagière comporte les variables suivantes:

- les agents (les personnes impliquées dans le processus de communication);
- le moment (où a lieu l'acte de communication);
- le lieu (où se passe l'acte de communication).

L'opération langagière comporte les variables suivantes:

- les fonctions (que doit remplir l'acte de communication);
- les objets (sur lesquels portera cet acte);
- les moyens (utilisés pour produire cet acte).

Chacune de ces variables est ensuite analysée au moyen d'un grand nombre d'éléments.

A titre d'exemple, tentons l'analyse d'un acte de communication en nous basant sur les variables de la grille de Richerich.

La situation langagière

agents: fonctionnaire de 30 ans / jeune femme inconnue.

moment: 10h.30 de l'avant-midi.

lieu: au bureau

L'opération langagière

les fonctions: l'inconnue veut un emploi à temps partiel comme documentaliste. Le fonctionnaire veut lui faire comprendre qu'il ne peut pas lui offrir d'emploi présentement mais que

peut-être il le pourra dans quelque temps.

l'objet: négociation de nouveaux postes.

moyen: au téléphone.

Voici l'actualisation authentique mais partielle de l'acte de communication en question.

"Pour le moment, euh, je n'ai pas grand... je n'ai pas beaucoup de place dans la mesure où on est à négocier, disons de nouveaux postes. Et c'n'étant la chose n'était, n'étant pas encore terminée. Euh... je ne peux promettre quoi que ce soit, à qui que ce soit."

Afin de voir l'effet des différentes variables sur la structuration du message, essayons d'imaginer la réponse du fonctionnaire si on modifie une des variables de l'acte de communication.

Exemples:

1. L'inconnue téléphone à 5 heures le vendredi après-midi. (moment)
2. L'inconnue l'appelle chez lui. (lieu)
3. Le fonctionnaire est en mesure de lui offrir un emploi. (la fonction)

Il ne fait aucun doute que la réponse du fonctionnaire serait différente dans chacun de ces cas.

Le problème qui nous préoccupe ici est de savoir comment rendre le fonctionnaire capable d'accomplir, en langue seconde, de tels types d'actes de communication. Ce n'est certes pas une chose facile parce qu'il ne s'agit pas tout simplement de construire des phrases qui soient

grammaticalement correctes. Il faut que le ou les énoncés de l'acte de communication soient appropriés à la situation langagière ainsi qu'à l'opération langagière.

3. Compétence linguistique et compétence à communiquer

Les diverses réponses du fonctionnaire entraînées par la modification d'une des variables nous amènent à conclure que pour rendre nos étudiants capables de communiquer il faut les doter d'une double compétence, à savoir, une compétence linguistique et une compétence à communiquer. La première compétence rend capable de structurer le message afin d'exprimer différents concepts tandis que la compétence à communiquer rend l'apprenant capable de fournir l'énoncé approprié à une situation donnée.

Quelques-unes des différences principales entre les deux compétences sont mises en parallèle au tableau suivant:

compétence linguistique

- se situe au niveau de la relation fixe entre les éléments d'une phrase.
- l'unité de base est la phrase vue comme étant un assemblage d'éléments logiquement et grammaticalement organisés afin d'exprimer un sens complet.

compétence à communiquer

- se situe au niveau de la signification à donner à un énoncé.
- l'unité de base est l'énoncé qui peut être défini comme étant l'actualisation dans une situation de communication d'une unité langagière fonctionnelle qui se suffit à elle-même.

compétence linguistique

- présuppose une connaissance des propriétés formelles et sémantiques des phrases.
- rend capable de structurer le message afin d'exprimer des concepts de temps, d'espace, de matière, de quantité, etc.

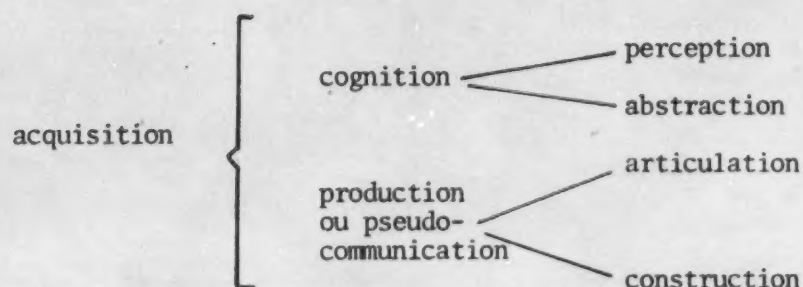
compétence à communiquer

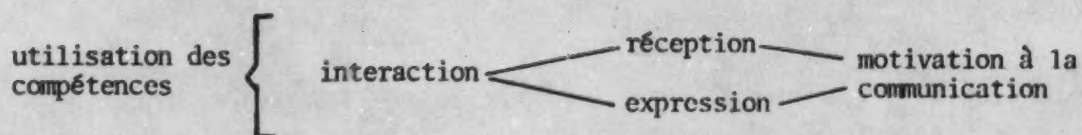
- présuppose une connaissance des conventions régissant l'usage convenable de la langue dans une situation donnée.
- rend capable d'interpréter et de formuler l'énoncé approprié à une situation de communication donnée.

Comme nous l'avons vu, la compétence à communiquer présuppose une certaine compétence linguistique. Les cours et méthodes sont souvent orientés vers l'acquisition de cette compétence. Les grammairiens, phonéticiens et linguistes nous ont fourni une description suffisamment savante des règles régissant les différents systèmes de la langue cible. Nous ne possédons pas beaucoup de données sur l'usage social de la langue. Les sociologues ne font que commencer à s'intéresser au sujet. Doit-on attendre le fruit de leurs recherches avant de modifier nos approches méthodologiques? Je ne crois pas, d'autant plus qu'ici au gouvernement fédéral se trouve une équipe de spécialistes en didactique des langues. Tout le domaine de l'analyse du discours reste à être exploré. Est-ce que le discours d'un SX est le même que celui d'un CR lorsque la tâche est identique. Est-ce qu'il y a quelque chose de commun entre le discours d'un SX et d'un CR lorsque les deux doivent faire connaître à un subordonné que son rendement est insatisfaisant?

On prend souvent pour acquis qu'un fonctionnaire qui sait interrompre quelqu'un et prendre la parole à une réunion pourra le faire si on lui fournit les éléments linguistiques nécessaires. Il faut être conscient que pour interrompre une autre personne il ne s'agit pas de pouvoir exprimer un concept dans des phrases grammaticalement correctes. Lui fournir un modèle de comportement ne suffit pas, il faut l'entraîner à le faire. Le cours doit alors être organisé de façon à permettre à l'étudiant d'expérimenter différents comportements afin de pouvoir en choisir un qui lui soit approprié. Les activités d'apprentissage doivent dépasser le niveau de la pseudo-communication qui ne livre rien qui soit significatif pour l'étudiant, c'est-à-dire qui ne transmet rien de ce qu'il pense ou ressent. Un bel exemple de pseudo-communication est l'étudiant qui demande à un collègue de trois mois: Comment vous appelez-vous?

Pour illustrer les différentes opérations du développement de la compétence linguistique et de l'aptitude à communiquer, j'emprunte un schéma de Wilga Rivers tel qu'il est présenté dans un article intitulé, "Nos étudiants veulent la parole" (Le Français dans le monde; jan.-fév. 1973).





L'interaction autonome ou si on veut l'utilisation des compétences demande qu'une personne puisse, dans un premier temps, identifier, comprendre et interpréter les énoncés d'une personne parlant la langue cible (réception), et dans un deuxième temps, qu'elle puissent formuler et produire des énoncés appropriés à une situation donnée (expression).

Cette utilisation, bien sûr, présuppose une connaissance (cognition) des règles de fonctionnement des systèmes de la langue cible ainsi que les règles d'usage de cette dernière. La production contrôlée permettra à l'étudiant de vérifier les hypothèses qu'il se sera formulées au sujet des règles de fonctionnement et d'usage de la langue. La pseudo-communication peut également être l'occasion d'entraîner l'apprenant à la construction de messages qui exigent une association rapide des éléments.

Il ne fait pas de doute qu'un entraînement est nécessaire si nous voulons rendre un étudiant capable de passer de l'emmagasiner d'un savoir linguistique à l'utilisation de ce savoir dans des situations multiples et imprévisibles de la vie courante ou du travail. Est-ce que nos cahiers de méthodologie suggèrent des activités d'apprentissage qui favorisent cet entraînement? Et en salle de classe, à qui appartient le choix et le déroulement de ces activités? Pour mesurer le degré de responsabilité laissé aux étudiants je vous propose un exercice.

Voici en quoi consiste l'exercice. J'ai mis sur feuille neuf

activités d'apprentissage possibles en salle de classe (les activités sont énumérées ci-dessous). Pour chacune des activités vous devez déterminer le degré de responsabilité exercé par les différents facteurs:

professeur ————— étudiant
matériel structuré ————— matériel non structuré
ou spontanéité

dans le choix et le déroulement de l'activité. Ces facteurs sont placés sur les axes d'un plan comme suit:

matériel structuré
professeur ————— étudiant
matériel non structuré
ou spontanéité

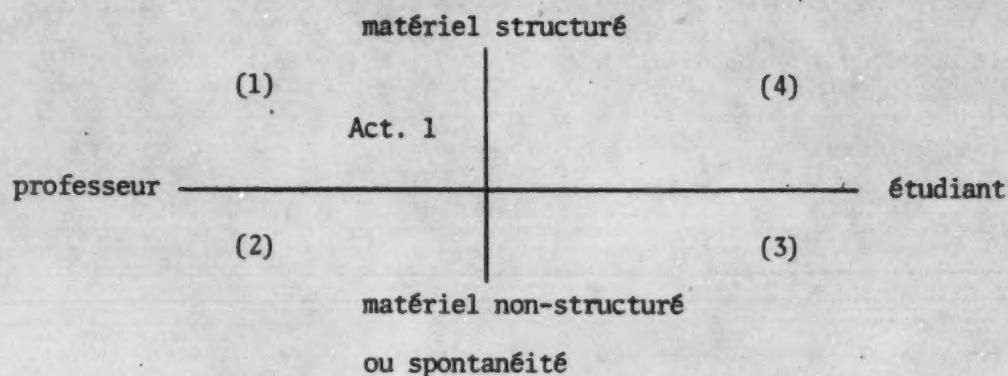
Après avoir déterminé la responsabilité des différents facteurs, situer l'activité dans un des quatre quadrant du plan. N.B. Le degré des responsabilité augmente à mesure qu'on s'éloigne du point de rencontre des deux axes.

Activité 1

Au moyen de questions préparées à l'avance, le professeur vérifie la compréhension globale du dialogue d'une des leçons de Dialogue Canada.

Ici, le professeur est responsable du choix et du déroulement de l'activité d'apprentissage. Ses questions préparées à l'avance deviennent du matériel structuré. Cette activité se situe alors dans le premier

quadrant du plan.



Situer maintenant les huit activités suivantes.

Activité 2

Le professeur explique la règle du pronom personnel, objet qui présente des difficultés à ses étudiants.

Activité 3

Le professeur passe successivement les images qui illustrent des séquences sonores d'un dialogue. La première fois avec le son ensuite sans son. Chaque fois, il fait reproduire le groupe sonore dans sa totalité par 2 ou 3 étudiants.

Activité 4

Un élève pose des questions aux autres élèves afin de faire réutiliser les structures mécanisées au cours d'une phase antérieure de la leçon.

Activité 5

Un étudiant prend par téléphone des renseignements sur certains produits, des services ou des horaires de voyage.

Activité 6

Les étudiants choisissent un texte de lecture, en font un résumé oral ou s'en inspirent pour créer un dialogue.

Activité 7

Quelques étudiants participent à un jeu de rôle dont le but est d'entraîner un des étudiants à réaliser un acte de communication particulier à une de ses tâches.

Activité 8

Un étudiant rapporte une nouvelle récente et la commente.

Activité 9

Un étudiant anglophone enregistre des conversations téléphoniques d'un de ses collègues francophones de travail afin de recueillir un matériel authentique.

Il serait bon que les professeurs et les élaborateurs de cours fassent un relevé des activités d'apprentissage qu'ils préconisent. Si le troisième quadrant compte peu d'activités, il ne faut pas se surprendre si les étudiants n'arrivent pas à s'exprimer librement et à communiquer avec

autrui.

4. Nouvelle approche pédagogique

Parce que le but final des cours de langues est de rendre le titulaire d'un poste bilingue capable d'accomplir ses tâches dans les deux langues officielles, je propose que le professeur encourage ses étudiants à:

- 1- identifier ses propres besoins langagiers;
- 2- à se formuler des objectifs d'apprentissage relatifs aux besoins identifiés;
- 3- à trouver les moyens qui lui permettront d'atteindre les objectifs fixés.

Il n'est pas nécessaire que l'étudiant consacre la totalité du temps à la poursuite de ses propres objectifs. Le professeur reste responsable des activités d'apprentissage qui permettront de développer les deux compétences: a) linguistique et b) à communiquer. Il doit cependant réserver du temps pendant lequel les étudiants poursuivent individuellement ou en groupes de deux ou trois un apprentissage en fonction de leurs besoins. Ceci peut vouloir dire recueillir un matériel authentique comme l'enregistrement de conversations téléphoniques d'un collègue francophone, jeu de rôle pour tenter d'expliquer un rapport à ses collègues, appeler une secrétaire et demander une personne ou un renseignement.

Les besoins langagiers sont identifiés en tenant compte de quatre variables: tâches, sujets traités, fonctions et habiletés requises.

Tâches et sujets

On demande d'abord à l'étudiant d'identifier et de décrire les cinq principales tâches de son poste. Il indique ensuite les sujets traités qui sont relatifs aux tâches décrites.

Fonctions

Il s'agit ensuite de préciser le pourquoi des actes de communication nécessités par l'accomplissement des tâches. Est-ce pour demander de l'information ou pour persuader l'autre de faire quelque chose?

Habiletés requises:

Quelles sont les habiletés requises pour réaliser les actes de communication relatifs à son travail?

Vous allez trouver à l'annexe A un exemple de questionnaire qui permettrait d'identifier les besoins langagiers d'un étudiant donné.

5. Objectif d'apprentissage

Une fois les actes langagiers identifiés, l'étudiant formule ses propres objectifs d'apprentissage. La définition de chaque objectif doit préciser:

1. le contenu de ce qu'il doit apprendre;
2. le comportement final visé;
3. les activités d'apprentissage qui lui permettront d'atteindre

ce comportement;

4. les critères permettant de dire si le résultat obtenu est satisfaisant.

Exemples de comportement visés:

1. pouvoir convoquer par téléphone des personnes à une réunion;
2. pouvoir demander un renseignement au sujet de photocopies qui ne sont pas entrées;
3. pouvoir expliquer brièvement le travail que je fais au sein du ministère des Travaux publics;
4. pouvoir exposer et discuter les politiques d'emploi de la Fonction publique;
5. pouvoir donner des ordres assez simples à un employé.

Une fois le comportement final déterminé, il faut préciser le contenu à apprendre et les critères qui permettront de mesurer l'efficacité du comportement. Le professeur peut aider l'étudiant à trouver des activités qui permettront l'acquisition du comportement désiré.

6. Conclusion

L'approche pédagogique proposée nécessitera un type particulier de matériel didactique. L'élaboration de ce matériel ne peut pas dépendre totalement d'une équipe d'élaborateurs détachés de l'enseignement et coupés des Opérations. Les professeurs ont un droit et un devoir de participer à la préparation d'un matériel didactique le mieux adapté à

des actes d'apprentissage donnés. J'irai plus loin en incluant l'étudiant dans le processus non pas de l'élaboration comme telle mais dans la cueillette et la présentation d'un matériel authentique. Les méthodes de cueillette de ce matériel restent à être déterminées et expérimentées.

Il est cependant grand temps que quelqu'un se penche sur le fait parce que je ne crois pas qu'une équipe de spécialistes munie des principes de recherche les plus scientifiques qui soient, parviennent à analyser les situations langagières de la Fonction publique suffisamment bien pour construire des modules qui répondent de façon efficace aux besoins langagiers des fonctionnaires.

On a longtemps pensé qu'apprendre une langue seconde voulait dire partir d'un point 0 pour progresser tranquillement et péniblement vers le point X en décidant pour l'étudiant le contenu, les étapes et les conditions dans lesquelles devaient se réaliser les actes d'apprentissage. On n'a pas su exploiter les principes généraux qui commandent le fonctionnement et l'usage de la langue qu'il aura à utiliser.

L'approche pédagogique proposée veut impliquer davantage l'adulte dans son processus d'apprentissage en lui demandant d'être responsable des activités d'apprentissage qui lui permettront d'atteindre des objectifs fixés. La vérification empirique de cette approche nous dira si elle est réalisable ou non.

ANNEXE

Analyse des actes de communication rencontrés au travail

But du questionnaire

Le but de ce questionnaire est de vous permettre de mieux connaître les différents types d'actes de communication que vous êtes appelé à faire dans l'exercice de vos fonctions. A ce niveau-ci, on ne fait pas de distinction entre l'emploi des langues maternelle et seconde.

I- Identification et description des tâches

Identifiez et décrivez brièvement les cinq principales tâches de votre poste. Indiquez ensuite les sujets traités lorsque vous accomplissez les différentes tâches.

Exemple d'une tâche d'un agent de dotation.

Je dois établir les normes de sélection devant servir à des concours de CR au ministère des Travaux publics.

sujets traités

Permatri, description des tâches, exigences fondamentales, qualités essentielles, expérience, affiches de concours, normes de sélection.

Tâche 1

a) description _____

b) sujets traités

Tâche II

a) description

b) sujets traités

Tâche III

a) description

b) sujets traités

Tâche IV

a) description

b) sujets traités

Tâche V

a) description

b) sujets traités

II Fonctions

Quand vous communiquez avec d'autres personnes ou que vous lisez un texte, pourquoi le faites-vous? Est-ce pour demander de l'information ou encore pour persuader l'autre de faire quelque chose? Cochez les fonctions relatives aux tâches décrites au numéro I.

Je communique pour:

demander de l'information

☐

donner de l'information

☐

analyser l'information

☐

diffuser de l'information

☐

demander un service

☐

rendre un service

☐

demander quelque chose

☐

donner quelque chose

☐

donner mon accord

☐

montrer mon désaccord

☐

exprimer un sentiment
ou une réaction

☐

demander à quelqu'un d'exprimer
un sentiment ou une réaction

☐

convaincre ou persuader

☐

III Habiletés

Quelles sont les habiletés requises pour réaliser les actes de communication relatifs à votre travail?

Je dois:

a) m'exprimer oralement:

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| - de vive voix | ☐ | - de vive voix avec notes | ☐ |
| - au téléphone | ☐ | - en utilisant d'autres média | ☐ |

b) lire:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| - des formulaires | ☐ | - des rapports | ☐ |
| - des lettres | ☐ | - des publications | ☐ |
| - des notes de service | ☐ | | |

c) écrire:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| - des formulaires | ☐ | - des rapports | ☐ |
| - des lettres | ☐ | - des articles pour publication | ☐ |
| - des notes de service | ☐ | | |

d) comprendre seulement lorsque la communication est:

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| - de vive voix | ☐ | - au moyen d'autres média | ☐ |
| - au téléphone | ☐ | | |

e) transcrire du matériel

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| - oral | ☐ | - écrit | ☐ |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|

f) réviser, pour la forme, du matériel:

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| - oral | ☐ | - écrit | ☐ |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|

SYSTEMES APPROXIMATIFS,
COMPETENCE COMMUNICATIVE
ET LA LIBERTE DU LOCUTEUR

Michel Lange

1. Introduction

La conception traditionnelle de la maîtrise d'une langue peut être ainsi résumée:

- a) Enoncer des phrases grammaticalement bien construites, à l'oral et à l'écrit;
- b) Atteindre une prononciation et une orthographe proches de celles d'un autochtone éduqué;
- c) Faire preuve de facilité d'élocution et de rédaction;
- d) Etre sensibilisé aux différents registres de la langue concernée.

Cette conception est un héritage de la formation classique et humaniste qui accorde à la connaissance de la grammaire, au sens large, une position centrale dans le comportement langagier. L'enseignement des langues étrangères vise à donner à l'apprenant une compétence proche de celle de l'autochtone. De fait, elle s'inspire aussi de cette conception. C'est un idéal à atteindre. L'impossibilité de parvenir à cet idéal a de tout temps préoccupé les enseignants: grammaire, traduction, analyse différentielle, analyse des erreurs, et maintenant compétence communicative.

Etant donné, qu'à chaque moment de l'apprentissage, l'apprenant élabore une série de stratégies qui s'articulent en des systèmes cohérents et consistants, il importe que l'on considère ses systèmes approximatifs compte tenu de sa compétence à communiquer. Un modèle de la compétence communicative du locuteur ne sera adéquat que, dans la mesure où au-delà des catégories grammaticales traditionnelles, on observe et analyse l'utilisation de la langue dans le discours, i.e. quels usages les locuteurs font des différentes options de la langue pour les actualiser dans le discours. En d'autres termes, pour capturer des généralisations significatives sur l'usage de la langue, il faut partir de la *fonction* vers les *formes* plutôt que d'assigner aux formes des fonctions immuables.

La raison d'être de cet article nous semble évidente : favoriser un échange d'idées sur de nouvelles stratégies d'enseignement des langues (maternelle et étrangère) en fonction des développements des systèmes approximatifs et de la compétence communicative de l'apprenant.

Dans une première partie, il y aura un rapide survol de la notion des systèmes approximatifs; une deuxième partie présentera une esquisse de la compétence communicative et sa pertinence pour l'enseignement des langues; une troisième partie fera le point sur les contraintes de divers ordres sur la liberté du locuteur (langue maternelle et langue étrangère). La conclusion insistera sur une nouvelle dimension et de nouveaux contours à donner à l'enseignement des langues étrangères.

2. La notion des systèmes approximatifs de l'apprenant (Nemser, 1971).

Pour Nemser, trois variables sont cruciales dans la situation d'apprentissage : a) la langue source de l'apprenant; b) la langue cible; c) l'état de langue de l'étudiant dans son apprentissage de la langue cible. Cet état de langue est une vue de l'esprit. Sa caractéristique est d'être instable dans ses différentes composantes. Cet état de langue est donc constamment dans une situation de structuration, de déstructuration et restructuration. Les systèmes approximatifs sont des indices des stages successifs des compétences grammaticales de l'apprenant. Ils ont une logique et une certaine cohérence interne.

On peut donc définir les systèmes approximatifs : "Le système linguistique déviant provisoirement utilisé par l'apprenant dans son effort pour parler la langue cible" (Nemser, 1971, p.116). L'idée de Nemser peut être résumée en trois points :

- a) A un certain moment, l'état de langue de l'apprenant est un système structuré, différent à la fois de la langue cible et de la langue source.

- b) L'état approximatif est constitué d'une succession d'états les uns mieux rapprochés de la langue cible que les autres.
- c) Dans certaines situations, les états de langue des apprenants coïncident grosso modo, avec des variantes dues aux différences de style d'apprentissage.

Pour citer Nemser :

The speech of a learner, according to the assumption, is structurally organized, manifesting the order and the cohesiveness of a system, although one frequently changing with a typical rapidity and subject to radical reorganization through the massive intrusion of new elements as learning proceeds. As such, learner speech should be studied not only by reference to LS and LT but in its own term as well. (Nemser, 1971;p.116).

Pour une présentation et une discussion plus détaillées de la notion des systèmes approximatifs, on peut consulter Nemser (1971), Corder (1973), Lange (1974).

3. La notion de compétence communicative (Hymes, 1971)

La compétence communicative peut être définie comme l'aptitude d'un individu à comprendre et à utiliser une façon de parler qui traduit l'intention d'un autre ou la sienne propre, et qui est appropriée à la situation ambiante. Le comportement langagier présente à la fois des aspects pragmatique et grammatical. Cette habileté est un indice de la connaissance de la grammaire et des usages - en d'autres termes, sa compétence.

La dichotomie chomskyenne de la compétence et de la performance a influencé l'orientation de l'enseignement des langues durant la dernière décennie. En admettant, contrairement aux théories de Skinner,

que l'exercice de la faculté du langage n'est pas dû à un répertoire de modèles renforcés par la répétition mais plutôt à une forme de créativité gouvernée par des règles, l'activité de l'enseignement des langues vivantes a fait un bon pas. Mais elle n'est pas allée suffisamment loin. Produire des phrases grammaticales et acceptables pour un autochtone est une condition nécessaire mais qui n'est pas suffisante. Elles doivent de plus être appropriées à la circonstance. Il y a certes la pression des contraintes situationnelles qui opèrent sur la production des phrases. L'implication de la distinction standard de l'"idéal speaker-hearer" serait que le locuteur n'a pas à sa disposition qu'une façon de parler, indépendamment des contextes ou des usages. Or, la communication dans l'usage de la langue, peut résulter en un échec quand le locuteur n'arrive pas à répondre aux exigences de certaines situations de communication. Ce qui est restreint alors, ce n'est pas le *code* - au sens de Bernstein - c'est le *message*.

Un exemple de compétence communicative : un locuteur donné peut avoir dans son répertoire toute une panoplie de phrases pour indiquer la naissance d'un incendie. Par exemple : il y a un incendie, il fait du feu, le feu éclate, le feu vient d'éclater, au secours, du feu! ... De toutes ces phrases, une seule est appropriée pour indiquer une situation d'urgence et inviter les occupants à évacuer l'immeuble "au plus sacrant". Il faut donc enseigner les types de message appropriés à chaque circonstance tout en étant dérivés tous du même noyau "il y a un incendie".

En revendiquant la compétence linguistique comme une composante de la compétence communicative, les socio-linguistes ouvrent une avenue pleine d'intérêts non seulement pour une amélioration de l'enseignement de la langue maternelle, mais aussi pour l'enseignement des langues étrangères.

Compte tenu du degré de redondance dans chaque langue, il faut être sensible à la conservation du message en dépit de l'absence des mots outils et des formes flexionnelles de certains mots. Le style télégraphique en est un exemple. Dans la communication, l'autochtone restitue au message les éléments dont l'absence n'est pas cruciale pour la compréhension. Il sert de régulateur. Il prévient même le sens. Avec l'enfant ou le locuteur étranger il ne s'attend pas à la production des phrases grammaticalement bien construites. Le discours spontané et dru est truffé de "phrases incomplètes" et d'hésitation chez l'autochtone. Ce qui fait que l'analyse grammaticale serait bien incapable de rendre compte des phrases incomplètes et des hésitations si elle s'en tient à son appareil de description (sujet, verbe, complément).

Bref, comme professeurs de langues étrangères, nous devons tenir compte, non seulement de l'aptitude de l'apprenant à énoncer des phrases bien formées, mais aussi des types de phrases appropriées aux circonstances dans lesquelles elles sont activées.

4. Rapports avec les systèmes approximatifs

Les systèmes approximatifs ont été définis ci-dessus : "Le système linguistique déviant provisoirement utilisé par l'apprenant dans son effort pour parler la langue cible" (Nemser, 1971; p.116). Les relations avec la compétence communicative semblent être faciles à mettre en lumière.

La compétence communicative est la situation désirée à laquelle devrait parvenir le locuteur (en langue maternelle et en langue étrangère). Pour chaque état de langue donné, qui dit système approximatif dit écart par rapport à une norme, la norme étant définie à la fois du point de vue du système linguistique et du point de vue de l'adéquation de ce système à une situation donnée. Toute déviation peut constituer un écart sur le plan linguistique ou un faux-pas sur le plan situationnel.

Dans un état de langue donné, l'apprenant modifie, réduit, appauvrit le type de phrase standard. Il fait une sorte de "baby-talk" ou de "pidgin". Il débarasse la langue de ses redondances. Au fur et à mesure du développement de ses systèmes approximatifs, il commence à percevoir, à restituer, et à utiliser les redondances de façon spontanée. Sa compétence communicative dépendra de la mesure dans laquelle, tout en laissant tomber les redondances, il préserve l'essentiel du message approprié qui sera récupéré par l'autochtone. Disons de plus que dans ce cas le message dépend crucialement de *l'intention* du locuteur.

Dans une grande mesure, on peut dire que les systèmes approximatifs sont en relation directe et constante avec la compétence à communiquer. Si la compétence communicative d'un locuteur est correcte, on peut dire que son état de langue dans la situation donnée se rapproche de la compétence d'un autochtone. En revanche, s'il dépense plus d'énergie que l'autochtone pour transmettre la même information, au point de vue *coût*, sa compétence est moins efficace que celle de l'autochtone. Il y a un rapport dialectique entre les systèmes approximatifs et la compétence communicative : les systèmes créent la compétence communicative tout en se faisant par la compétence communicative.

5. Implications pour l'enseignement et les tests de langue

Pour le moment, il serait prématuré de parler d'applications. Parlons plutôt d'implications. La compétence communicative privilégie le message. La rectitude de la forme est secondaire. Ce qui importe le plus, c'est l'intention du locuteur, la *fonction* du message et les *règles d'usage* (i.e. comment l'autochtone réagit ordinairement dans une situation donnée). Une telle notion a des retombées importantes sur l'enseignement des langues.

En ce qui concerne l'enseignement de la langue maternelle, il s'agit de mettre en évidence les "traffic rules", les règles d'usage qui régissent certaines façons de parler, les contraintes situationnelles sur le style, en un mot, les limites sociolinguistiques de l'énoncé au sens le plus large du terme. Il ne s'agit pas que d'impropriétés de

termes ni de registres de langage. Il faut entrevoir l'enseignement de la compétence à communiquer en termes de "who speaks, what language, to whom, when and where" (Fishman). Quand le premier Ministre du Canada prend un bain de foule pendant la campagne électorale, il est permis à un électeur de lui dire face à face : "Hey, Pet, we'll make it". Un tel langage friserait l'effronterie s'il était tenu en présence du Ministre par un employé subalterne des Finances avant la présentation du budget.

Donc à un enseignement basé sur la mécanique de la grammaire, un enseignement réaliste de la langue doit ajouter une composante basée sur la façon dont le locuteur se comporte.

En un sens, l'apprentissage d'une deuxième langue ressemble à l'acquisition de la langue maternelle. Les mêmes démarches vaudraient grosso modo pour l'enseignement des langues étrangères. En privilégiant le message et la fonction au risque de se répéter, ce qui sera primordial, c'est l'intention du locuteur. La correction grammaticale, sans être bafouée, sera secondaire. On encouragera l'étudiant à l'aspect factuel de ses actes langagiers même si ses énoncés ne sont pas toujours des répliques fidèles de la grammaire. Comme dans l'apprentissage de la langue maternelle, l'aspect pidginisation est une étape inévitable. Cette position peut paraître suspecte. Plus d'un y verrait la main d'inconoclastes scandaleux. Mais si l'on observe l'apprenant de la rue, il s'approprie la langue en la domestiquant, en s'en servant.

Son langage authentique et d'usage dit avec des écarts linguistiques acceptables l'expérience qu'il veut communiquer. Halliday écrit justement : "The Mastery of language, it should be insisted, is not simply the ability to say what one means; rather, it is the ability to mean" (Doughty, P., et. al., Language in Use; 1971; p.4).

Il y va aussi de la formation des professeurs. Il faut encore nous arrêter sur l'originalité de l'apprentissage d'une deuxième langue en milieu naturel. Tant que l'apprenant n'est pas encore en mesure de digérer de nouveaux aspects de la langue, il ne les enregistre pas dans son système cognitif. L'y forcer provoquerait un court-circuit.

Il est malheureux que parfois des enseignants forcent l'apprenant à répéter trois ou quatre fois une structure ou un son, sans égard pour le processus d'apprentissage, sans se souvenir de la différence entre un adulte et un enfant de la maternelle. Avant même l'impatience du professeur, la réaction chez l'étudiant se traduit par un blocage psychologique accompagné d'une baisse de la motivation et d'une certaine fossilisation dans l'apprentissage. Parfois, le résultat est l'abandon pur et simple suivi d'une attitude négative à peine retenue contre l'apprentissage des langues.

Une saine pédagogie de l'enseignement des langues développerait une sorte de "balanced skills approach" basée sur l'encouragement de l'apprenant à partager ses expériences. Viendrait ensuite l'amélioration graduelle de l'expression compte tenu du modèle. Enfin le rythme

serait directement incorporé à l'aspect "caractère approprié" de l'expression.

Les objectifs de l'apprentissage et de l'enseignement pourraient aussi servir de guide dans la stratégie de présentation. L'apprenant qui apprend la langue uniquement pour lire une revue de sa profession ou qui a toute autre motivation instrumentale, serait mieux servi par l'approche grammaticale. Celui qui a des transaction avec le public ou qui a une motivation intégrative aurait besoin d'apprendre à communiquer.

Il faudrait donc cesser de stigmatiser les fautes vénielles et donner une prime à la communication. Quand l'apprenant est en mesure de produire la bonne forme, il y accède dans la joie. Après tout, apprendre une langue et joie de vivre ne sont pas mutuellement exclusifs.

Cette approche provoquante ne serait pas sans bouleverser le modèle et la signification des tests de langue étrangère. Les items devraient "éliciter" des énoncés factuels de l'étudiant. Il serait alors intéressant de distribuer les grades sous les titres : adéquation, grammaticalité, facilité (fluency). Il faut provoquer l'étudiant pour l'impliquer.

6. Contraintes sur la liberté du locuteur

Le degré de liberté peut être défini ici : l'ensemble des *options* disponibles dans le répertoire du locuteur quand il est en situation de communication. Il y a une grande différence entre les choix très réduits du débutant, la relative aisance du bilingue avancé et l'aisance complète

de l'autochtone cultivé. Le problème se pose aussi en langue maternelle, compte tenu des classes socio-économiques. Les contraintes de divers ordres peuvent mettre le locuteur dans une situation précaire et insécure telle que les énoncés qui lui sont accessibles soient drôlement réduits.

a) Contraintes dues à la compétence linguistique

Selon le degré de maîtrise de la langue, la liberté de l'apprenant est variable. Dans une situation donnée, parmi les paraphrases ou les transformations possibles d'un type de phrases, une seule convient vraiment à la situation. Le locuteur autochtone qui connaît bien sa langue et qui baigne dans sa culture n'a pas théoriquement de difficulté. Ceci est indépendant des notions de dialecte et de registre de langage. Prenons par exemple la transformation emphase.

Partons de la phrase de base, mieux désignée ici sous l'appellation de "straight sentence".

1. J'ai revu mes amis.
2. Mes amis, je les ai revus. (left dislocation + shadow pronoun)
3. Je les ai revus, mes amis. (shadow pronoun + right dislocation)
4. Ceux que j'ai revus, ce sont mes amis. (cleft sentence)
6. Moi, j'ai revu mes amis. (left dislocation + shadow pronoun)
7. J'ai revu mes amis, moi. (right dislocation + shadow pronoun)
8. Mes amis, eux, je les ai revus. (Double dislocation)

- 9- Mes amis, je les ai revus, eux. (double dislocation)
- 10- Je les ai revus, eux, mes amis. (double dislocation)
- 11. *Je les ai revus, mes amis, eux.

Voici donc une cascade de phrases dérivées du même noyau (1), par des transformations différentes ou par des transformations avec des directions différentes. Elles ne sont pas toujours équivalentes et dépendent de l'intention du locuteur dans une situation qui activera l'une d'elles.

Tout locuteur autochtone du français possède dans son répertoire la gamme de 1 à 10 et rejette 11 comme bizarre, irrecevable et non conforme à son sentiment linguistique. Son choix est donc illimité dans ce paradigme. En revanche, dans un état de langue donné, les systèmes approximatifs de l'apprenant ne font pas état d'un tel éventail de possibilités. Il n'est pas non plus habile à inventer, selon la nuance qu'il veut exprimer, le type de construction adéquat. On ne parlera pas de déficiences ou de lacunes dans son répertoire, mais plutôt d'écarts par rapport à l'autochtone.

A cela peuvent sans doute s'ajouter les limites de registre. L'apprenant ne peut pas également jouer sur tous les claviers. Il y a aussi les impropriétés de termes, causes de faux-pas sociolinguistiques. Ne disposant pas de phrases adéquates, l'apprenant a recours à un autre type de phrase ayant un sens proche mais qui traduit imparfaitement son intention.

Ces facteurs limitent donc singulièrement la liberté d'expression de l'apprenant. Ce qui lui manque, de plus, c'est l'habileté à les assigner adéquatement à la situation appropriée.

b) Contraintes imposées par l'acceptabilité des fautes de la part de l'interlocuteur

Dans les situations de communication face à face, la performance du locuteur est influencée par l'attitude de l'auditeur. Ici, il ne s'agit pas nécessairement de leur position sociale relative, mais surtout de l'attitude vis-à-vis des lapsus et des erreurs sur les points de langue.

Les réactions sont diverses : éclat de rire, sourire, correction et expansion de la structure défectueuse, remplacement du terme impropre, silence. Selon le degré de sensibilisation de l'interlocuteur à la notion d'erreurs, il interviendra dans le "stream of speech" du locuteur, parfois de façon inconsiderée en brisant le rythme, l'élan ou même le plaisir de la communication. Selon le tempérament de l'apprenant, il continue, il répète ou s'arrête court.

Chez le professeur, la notion d'acceptabilité des fautes a des implications sérieuses pour l'exercice de la compétence communicative dans la langue cible. Dans la mesure où l'apprenant parle de ses expériences propres, il serait regrettable d'intervenir et tuer chez lui la spontanéité. Il vaudrait peut-être mieux le laisser parler et éventuellement reprendre les structures auxquelles il a fait des entorses.

On a remarqué que les adultes et les enfants passent par des phases parfois identiques dans le processus d'apprentissage. On a aussi noté qu'on corrige rarement l'enfant de façon explicite quand il emploie une forme grammaticale déviante. On peut donc supposer que la correction intempestive des erreurs d'un adulte va contre le processus de l'apprentissage spontané. Quand il aura assimilé la bonne forme, il la produira de façon toute spontanée. Plus librement parle l'apprenant, plus facilement il vainc ses inhibitions.

c) Contraintes des facteurs socio-culturels sur la communication

Les cadres socio-culturels exercent une influence déterminante sur le comportement langagier. Selon que l'on a affaire à une situation de diglossie ou à un niveau de langue identifié comme une marque d'appartenance à une culture, les attitudes de l'interlocuteur peuvent exercer de sévères contraintes sur le locuteur.

Dans le cas de *diglossie*, les deux langues ou niveaux de langue sont en distribution complémentaire; ou mieux, elles sont des variantes situationnelles l'une de l'autre. Leur utilisation est non-conflictuelle en ce sens qu'on leur assigne des fonctions d'un caractère bien marqué. Celui qui violerait ces conventions pourrait encourir des regards sévères, un silence éloquent ou toute forme de pénalité appropriée.

Cependant, il y a des valeurs culturelles évidentes attachées à l'usage d'une variante d'une langue. On s'attend à ce qu'un étranger

parle le niveau neutre, commun à différentes communautés. Toute tentative de s'exprimer dans cette variante assortie d'indices culturels peut être considérée par les locuteurs comme un affront, une ingérence inacceptable qui peut provoquer de l'étonnement, un sourire amusé ou parfois même des rebuffades assaisonnées d'impolitesse. Cette démarche innocente du locuteur peut avoir l'effet d'un coup de tonnerre indécemment dans un ciel de vacances.

Par exemple, un non-autochtone qui s'échine à parler le Joual, et dont la prononciation, le contour d'intonation et l'à propos de l'énoncé le trahissent à chaque tentative est tout simplement "niaiseux". De la même façon, un franco-qubécois qui, de retour d'un séjour de deux mois à Paris, accroche des tons de ti-ti parisien à tout propos et hors de tout propos serait vite dénoncé par ses confrères comme un "maudit traître". Pour l'interlocuteur, ce n'est pas un style innocent.

Donc, l'apprenant devrait être conscient de ces valeurs qui peuvent faire échec à l'effet qu'il veut produire. La différence entre la motivation instrumentale et la motivation intégrative joue ici. Le désir de l'apprenant de s'identifier à un groupe jusqu'à en épouser le parler est certes un renforçateur puissant. Cependant, un enseignement de la langue dans un contexte culturel devrait tenir compte de l'indice d'acceptabilité ou de rejet des locuteurs autochtones pour l'étranger qui utiliserait des formes ayant des connotations culturelles marquées dans leur langue. Ce faisant, on épargne à l'apprenant certaines déconvenues

ou des déconvenues certaines. L'attitude de l'apprenant vis-à-vis d'un niveau de langue regardé par lui comme non acceptable, peut aussi bloquer l'apprentissage de ce niveau de langue.

7. Conclusion

La composante grammaticale n'est qu'un des aspects de la compétence communicative. Plus qu'une série de phrases bien formées, le locuteur doit savoir formuler des énoncés, des semi-phrases ou des soupirs appropriés, même si ces semi-phrases ne sont pas toujours la réplique fidèle de la grammaire descriptive et normative de la langue.

L'enseignement des langues étrangères est concerné par les derniers développements des notions de systèmes approximatifs et de compétence communicative. Pour répondre à ces notions dont le bien-fondé a été signalé ci-dessus il faudrait

1. mettre l'emphasis un peu moins sur l'exactitude grammaticale et favoriser un peu plus le *message*;
2. demander au professeur d'intervenir avec à-propos pour aider l'apprenant à formuler son *intention*;
3. sensibiliser les professeurs à l'aspect non pathologique des *erreurs* et découvrir leur caractère nécessaire et *transitoire*;
4. donner aux tests de nouvelles dimensions et de nouveaux contours basés sur le caractère approprié du message, sur la grammaticalité et sur le débit;

5. inviter l'étudiant à parler beaucoup plus de ce qui le concerne (loisirs, travail, sports, vie moderne) pour qu'il sente le besoin de communiquer.

Disons enfin que pour étudier les contraintes de l'auditeur sur le locuteur, il serait intéressant de sonder l'indice de réaction des autochtones aux impropriétés (grammaticales et situationnelles) des locuteurs de la langue cible.

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